

PREJUDICE

AGAINST

COLORED PEOPLE.

BY

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"Judge not according to the *appearance*, but judge righteous judgment."—JOHN vii : 24.

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PREJUDICE AGAINST COLORED PEOPLE.

THE Bible clearly teaches the unity of the human race. It informs us that God made the first man and the first woman—Adam and Eve—and that from them descended all mankind.

Hence, the Bible addresses all men alike. It is not exclusively for the rich or the poor, the learned or the unlearned, the vicious or the comparatively innocent, for male or female, for the dwellers in this or that continent or country, or for men of any particular color or stature; but for all men, in all lands, of all varieties, and under all circumstances—the race.

The Bible describes all men as sinners; guilty, corrupt, ruined in themselves. It makes no exceptions to this charge on account of color, stature, nativity, worldly honors or wealth, intellectual or moral culture; all are sinners. What-

ever else they may differ in, they are alike guilty, corrupt, ruined through sin.

The Bible offers salvation to all. Jesus Christ is "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" that is, for sinners, irrespective of all peculiarities, personal, social, or national. Hence, the commission to God's ministers: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

The Bible points to one judgment-bar, before which "all nations shall be gathered;" every individual of the human race, from the first man down to the last.

The Bible reveals a heaven for all the righteous, and a hell for all the wicked. Its retributions are based, simply and solely, upon moral character.

Again: As far back as human history extends, we find differences in the human family: some are of small stature and others larger; some of a lighter and others of a darker hue; some rich and some poor; some honorable and some despised; some of correct moral deportment, and some dissolute; some of one occupation, some of another, and many of none; and, to name no more, all divided off into peoples, nations, tribes, etc.

Of these differences color is the only one with which we have here to do. Individuals of the human family are, in this respect, very unlike, from the deep black of some of the Australasian tribes to the fair complexion of the Circassian, the *vast majority being of all shades* between these extremes.

These differences have given rise to much discussion and innumerable volumes. But the most candid and learned physiologists have traced these diversities of hue to climate, diet, modes of life, social usages, diseases, and other causes, physical and moral. And in this judgment, be it particularly noted, there has been a general, indeed a *universal* concurrence, as is proved by the laws, decisions, and moral sentiments of all nations. These laws, decisions, and moral sentiments, are all found, at some points, to recognize a *common nature, human nature*, under all these varieties; and men are thus alike regarded and treated, exclusively of complexion, as innocent or guilty.

Once more: With these differences of color among men, just as in all the other diversities above alluded to, and many others not noticed, but equally great and striking, the human family

equally agree in this: they all exhibit unmistakable evidence of a *moral nature*. And it is this which mainly constitutes the *sameness* of our race. In whatever else we may disagree, we are here alike: we are all moral creatures; and in this we differ just as unmistakably from all the other orders of beings inhabiting the earth. It is this moral nature which indissolubly unites the whole human family, constituting them one, and giving them a common heritage of inalienable rights and interests. It is, also, their crown of glory, because it lifts them up immeasurably above all other creatures, animate and inanimate, by which they are here surrounded, and gives them "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." (Gen. i: 26.)

How important, then, that we have a clear conception of what constitutes a moral nature. No knowledge can be more valuable to us. If we are wrong here, we are wrong throughout. And mistake may be fatal.

What, then, is a moral being?

A moral being is one who has an understanding to discern the relations of things, combined with a conscience to discover the moral views

and conduct suggested by these relations, and to approve or disapprove of these views and conduct; and a will free to choose or refuse the views and conduct in this way presented as approved or disapproved. He who has such an understanding, such a conscience, and such a will, is a moral being. But take away any one of these faculties, and you destroy moral agency. If I have, for example, an understanding to discern the relations of things, but no conscience to perceive moral views and conduct thus suggested, and to approve or disapprove these views and conduct; or no will capable of choosing or refusing the views and conduct thus brought before me, I am, manifestly, not a moral agent. This remark is true in any other alternative of which the case admits. Understanding, conscience, and will are, then, the elements of moral nature. He, and only he, who has them all, is a moral agent.

Further: Only a moral being is rightfully a subject of moral government; and all such must be under moral government. We can not think otherwise without contradicting the moral nature that God has given to us.

Hence, in the case of alleged crime in human courts, if it can be shown that the person indicted

is an idiot, or insane, or, at least, that, without any fault on his part, he could not exercise, at the time when the act was committed, all the faculties of a moral being, he is held guiltless, because not responsible, not subject to moral government.

But, to establish this irresponsibility, let it be carefully noted, that no mere fact or circumstance of color, stature, sex, education, social position, religious profession, or nationality, can be taken. These are considered, and justly considered, altogether irrelevant. The evidence must be something which proves that the accused is without moral agency, or, at least, was innocently without power to exercise moral agency when the alleged crime was committed. Only such want of moral character, or such impossibility of exercising moral agency, can rightfully establish irresponsibility.

But, to throw still further light upon this momentous subject: suppose in any community a law, or imperative custom, which prohibited to persons of short stature, or red hair, or pink eyes, the exercise of their civil or social rights as human beings, would we not see, and feel, and indignantly cry out against this as an un-

reasonable, oppressive, wicked law, or custom? * Nothing but what is moral ought to affect the inherent rights of human nature.

With these fundamental principles in view, let us now proceed, calmly and candidly, and with prayer for God's help and blessing, to consider a prejudice which, it is allowed on all hands, over-spreads our land. We mean the SENTIMENT OR

* "Which of you," says Jesus, "by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" And again: "Thou canst not make one hair white or black."

In these natural impossibilities, here brought to view by our Lord, we see at once our irresponsibility, and, therefore, must feel the unreasonableness and injustice of regarding others as guilty, or treating them unkindly, on account of either of the conditions here indicated--their stature, or the color of their hair. Here the voice of God, and the clearest dictates of man's nature, both conspire to teach us our duty, and to guard us against sin.

Let us, then, in the light thus shed down upon us from above, and blazing out from within, look at two incidents related by a very intelligent and candid traveler, Frederick Law Olmsted. He tells us, that on a sidewalk in the city of Richmond, Virginia, "two colored women had engaged in conversation, and, looking at each other, had not noticed the approach of a white man, who immediately lifted up his cane and pushed one of the women aside with it." He saw, also, three white men, arm-in-arm, taking the whole of the sidewalk, hustle a black man off it, giving him a blow, as they passed, that sent him, staggering, into the middle of the street.—*Sea-Board Slave States*, page 29.

FEELING OF AVERSION TO COLORED PEOPLE ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR COLOR. Let us look first at some of the

I. *Consequences* of this prejudice.

a. It keeps in ignorance, degradation, and suffering, increasing millions throughout our country, North and South. In the latter, all education, even in its simplest elements, is prohibited to the four millions of bondmen. Such laws must, of course, brutalize its victims, and reduce them to the bare necessities of animal life. No one can fully appreciate the suffering and wretchedness of a people so crushed to the earth. They are the victims of the most cruel and remorseless of all possible despotisms: that of the *selfishness* and the *fears* of their white oppressors. And every avenue of escape or deliverance is shut up against them by law.

b. It robs them of all their rights, social, political, and religious. The fundamental principle of the Code Noir, or the Black Laws of the South, is simply this: *the slave is to be regarded and treated, to all intents and purposes, as a chattel.*

He is thus legally robbed of his manhood, and reduced to the condition of a brute-beast. He

has no rights; not even that of marriage and paternity. He can own no property, real or personal, not even the clothes on his back. He can pursue, on his own account, no trade or occupation. He has, therefore, no means even of religious culture and worship, except what his oppressor may please to allow him. And he may be sold, at any moment, so as forever to separate him from all he holds dear, just as a horse or a dog.

But, as a refinement upon fiendish malignity, he has one right left to him: the right to be punished for crime, or the bare suspicion of crime, against his oppressor. The wretched colored man can not defend his life, neither can the miserable colored woman her chastity, against a white ruffian. It is *death penalty* for the victim barely to raise his arm, in any case, against his oppressor.

c. It eternally ruins countless multitudes.

The Bible is, of course, a sealed book to a people whom the law forbids to be taught to read. And they are, also, stripped of all their earnings, whereby they might procure to themselves a preached Gospel. And whatever religious privileges may be allowed them are, necessarily, so

scant and defective, at the best, as, to a fearful extent, to shut them out from the possibility of salvation. Hence, however we may be shocked, we can not be surprised to read the statement of a committee of the Synod of Kentucky, that these millions of "colored people are little other than a body of *heathens in our midst*."

We say nothing, here, of the terrible reaction of such a system of oppression upon the white population; the ignorance, immorality, ferocity, and barbarism which it will be sure to bring upon them. Once more:

d. It greatly hinders the conversion of the world.

The presence of four millions of slaves, ignorant, degraded, suffering, must necessarily corrupt the religion of the whites, and render it almost powerless for good to them; while a Christianity, so corrupted, must in turn become, in the hands of the oppressors, a fearful instrument to tighten the bonds and crush the spirit of the oppressed.

But, were this miserable race delivered from oppression, and left free to pursue their own happiness, what multitudes of them would be brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; and how many thousands of these Christian men

and Christian women would be willing to take their lives in their hands, and go to the ends of the earth, and convey the glad tidings of salvation to the whole colored race, of every clime! Their complexion, as well as their constitution, would give them peculiar advantages in such missions. As it is, our benevolent boards find it very difficult to procure even a scant supply of competent colored missionaries.

And now, dear reader, for all this terrible cruelty, and the heart-rending wrongs it inflicts upon its victims, what is the excuse, always operative, but not always, yet often avowed; what, we ask, is the excuse? "He is a NIGGER! a NIGGER!! *The colored man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect.*"

But, if the indulgence of this wicked prejudice has inflicted such frightful evils upon its unhappy objects, rest assured that it will, sooner or later, under a righteous Providence, bring down vastly more frightful evils upon the oppressor. What is the main cause of the awful calamities that have already come upon us, as a nation, and threaten to crush out our very life? And why have we, hitherto, poured out our best blood like water, and brought mourning into multi-

tudes of families at the North, rather than employ the hundreds of thousands of willing hands at the South, now coerced to sustain this most wicked rebellion, but which would gladly have co-operated with us in putting it down? Justice and mercy, alike, plead for this measure; but a cruel, wicked prejudice forbade it.

But we inquire, secondly, what is

II. The *origin* of this prejudice?

a. Pride. In our assumed superiority we are irresistibly inclined to smile at the kind-hearted colored girl, who, Mungo Park tells us, when she had gazed at him for some time, exclaimed, "*Oh, how I pity the stranger, he is so WHITE!*"

Such a specimen of the human race had never been seen in that part of Africa before. No wonder that his pale face was so disagreeable to one who had been accustomed, all her days, to the dark (and in her eyes the richer) hues of her countrymen. It is doubtful whether, had Park concluded to remain in the tribe, his pale face would ever have permitted him to *rise* to the level of the dusky denizens of the soil. But the picture has another side.

We who are born with a fair complexion are, also, proud of its possession, and are disposed,

on this account, to regard as beneath us those of darker hue. Such pride of color is bad enough in a poor, benighted heathen; but in an enlightened Christian people, is it not a *great sin*—a sin to be deeply repented of, and especially when its miserable consequences are now so fearfully developed before our eyes?

b. Contempt is another source of this prejudice against colored people.

We see millions of the colored race in the most abject slavery in one part of our country, and thousands of them in the other nominally free, but excluded from all respectable pursuits, and shut up to the most menial employments, and even social intercourse with them carefully restricted. Hence their color becomes, in our eyes, a badge of disgrace, and we look down upon them with contempt.

c. Hate is the last source we shall notice of this sinful prejudice.

There is no bitterness more intense than that of the oppressor against the conscious victims of his injustice; and it has not been left to any modern school of ethics to discover this truth. The wise man long since announced it. "A lying tongue," he teaches us, "hateth those that

are afflicted by it." And if a lying tongue engenders such malignity in its possessor, how much more envenomed the hate where the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, gives himself up to the work of oppression! One of the shrewdest observers of human nature, Henry Fielding, remarks to this effect: Be careful how you let a man who has injured you know that you are aware of the evil he has done you. So long as he thinks you are ignorant of it, he may cease his enmity, and, perhaps, turn around and become your best friend; but if he is aware that you are sensible of his injustice, his malice will be sure to become more intense, and will, probably, burn the more fiercely against you so long as you live.

These profound revelations of fallen human nature clear up the secret of that almost universal and deeply-seated dislike of the colored man among us. He has, for more than a century, been the victim of the foulest wrongs in our land. He stands up, continually, in our presence, as a living witness of our injustice. Hence, we hate him; we can not forgive him. His very color renders him odious in our eyes, by "*setting our sin ever before us.*" And it never can be otherwise with us, till we cry mightily to the God of

all grace to sweeten this fountain of bitterness within us.

In view of this very brief sketch of our sin, its consequences and its origin, we would ask the reader's candid and serious attention to four questions :

1. If I am not willing to give up my prejudice against colored people, can I claim to be a reasonable and just man?

Is it reasonable and just to dislike any creature because he is as God made him? It is manifestly no more reasonable and just to indulge a prejudice against others on account of their complexion, than on account of their hair, or of their stature, or any other physical difference found in men. All such prejudices are equally unreasonable and unjust.

2. Can a man indulge such a prejudice, and really love his country, especially at this crisis of our history?

A most ferocious demon, from the bottomless pit, has clutched the throat of our beloved country. It is now a question of life and death with us. It has become most appallingly manifest, that either liberty or slavery must go down in this land.

But what is at the bottom of this tremendous struggle? It is mainly prejudice against the colored man. This has robbed him of nearly all his rights, inflicted hopeless degradation upon him, in the North and at the South, and so let loose that flood of calamities which now threatens to overwhelm us in one common ruin. And till this most unreasonable and unjust prejudice be abjured, there can be no true, permanent peace to our country. How, then, can I love my country, and yet hold on to this most unreasonable, unjust, wicked, and ruinous prejudice?

3. Can I be a Christian, and willingly indulge this prejudice?

I, a Christian! and yet dislike my fellow-man made in God's image, and redeemed with the precious blood of Christ! I, a Christian! and yet stand between my despised brother and the salvation of the Gospel; hinder as much as possible his usefulness for Christ; keep him ignorant, poor, oppressed, vicious, miserable! Is not all this most unchristian? But is not my cherished prejudice at the root of all these terrible evils? And can I, while conniving at these things, aye, helping them on by my example, can I be a Christian? Think of these things, dear reader!

4. Can I hope to enter heaven with such a prejudice?

I look down, here, with contempt, upon my fellow-man, made in God's image, because his complexion is darker than my own! I am averse to all social intercourse with him; rarely, perhaps never, give him the hand of friendly greeting; shut him out, as far as possible, from all respectable employment; exclude him from our schools; can scarcely endure him in church or the prayer-meeting; and even refuse to let him, at last, find a resting-place in the same ground with myself. And can I cherish this state of mind, and persevere in it through life, and yet hope to go to heaven, where admission will depend, not upon worldly wealth, rank, learning, color, stature, nativity, or any such distinctions, but simply and solely upon the fact, whether the man has "*feared God, and worked righteousness?*"

Suppose I were, thus prejudiced, to reach heaven, how could it be a place of happiness to me? The presence of my colored brother would be an everlasting eyesore to me, continually vexing my soul, and poisoning every fountain of blessedness to me. Like disdainful Haman, I would be disposed to cry out, even in the king-

dom of heaven, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate!"

And let it not here be said, that all these differences will then be done away. What reason have we to think so? This we do know, that endless variety is one of the great means of interest and enjoyment in the present world; and if so much of this is seen, here and now, in our little corner of God's creation, what amazing variety will his wide Universe exhibit, throughout eternity, to the gaze and admiration of all holy beings! God will thus be good, though our eye be evil.

Are these things so? Then, dear reader, is it not your duty to

1. Strive against this prejudice

Make up your mind, at once, to this effort. And then you will be disposed, ~~firmly and~~ earnestly, to

2. Set about the use of all the means in your power, to overcome this prejudice; as, first,

Prayer. Cry mightily and continually to God, to deliver you from a bondage so unreasonable, unjust, degrading, wicked, ruinous. Then,

Throw all your influence into the scale against

this prejudice in those about you—the Church as well as the world. And the best way to do this is to

Encourage schools, and every other means of education, and of moral and religious culture among colored people. Counsel and assist them, also, to procure places in which they may be taught trades, and other industrial pursuits, and kindly encourage those of them who may prove competent and worthy in their several callings. In a word,

And them, all in your power, to become more enlightened, virtuous, useful, happy! and so elevated, in character and circumstances, to the true condition of God's rational, immortal, redeemed creatures, subjects, alike with ourselves, of his infinitely wise, holy, benevolent, and eternal kingdom.

"Therefore all things, whatsoever, ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."—MATT. vii: 12.

"God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."—ACTS, xvii: 26.

"God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."—ACTS, x: 34-5.